

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-3

NEW YORK TIMES
21 September 1983

More Aid to Nicaraguan Rebels Backed

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 — The Reagan Administration told the Senate Intelligence Committee today that it planned to continue covert military aid to the Nicaraguan insurgents until the Sandinista Government stopped giving military support to the rebels in El Salvador, according to participants in the meeting.

William J. Casey, Director of Central Intelligence, and Secretary of State George P. Shultz met for several hours behind closed doors with the committee, which is headed by Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona. Senator Goldwater had requested a report on plans for the fiscal year that begins on Oct. 1.

The Administration is obliged to report to the intelligence committees of both houses on the goals and objectives of any covert activity. The committee had declared in May that it would cut off the aid in the absence of a new report by Sept. 30.

Most of the committee members were reportedly satisfied by the limited nature of the Nicaraguan program. Some had been concerned because Mr. Casey had reportedly suggested before the Congressional recess last month that the Administration might decide to back the Nicaraguan "contras," as the insurgents are known, with the aim of overthrowing the Managua Government, which is supported by Cuba and other Communist states.

'Very Impressed With Shultz'

"The members were very impressed with Shultz," one participant said. "They thought the plan was much more sensible than in the past. It looked as if it had some coherence and practicality."

President Reagan had said publicly that the United States had no intention of overthrowing the Sandinista Government. Administration officials had said that the \$19 million which had been appropriated in the current fiscal year for covert aid was only meant to prevent arms from Nicaragua from going to the insurgents in El Salvador.

An Administration official said that the program outlined by Mr. Casey and Mr. Shultz went beyond the scope of the current program. He said it was not limited to interdicting arms, but was more broadly stated in general support of the Nicaraguan rebels. "We were always being questioned," an official said, "on whether we were going beyond our program of interdicting arms. Now we say, 'Yes, we are supporting the rebels until the Nicaraguans stop their subversion in neighboring countries.'"

"It was a very positive statement," the official said, adding that "I wished the press would have been able to hear it."

Honduras and Costa Rica Included

One participant said that the covert aid was to be used, not only until the Sandinistas stopped supporting insurgents in El Salvador, but in Honduras and Costa Rica as well.

The Administration official stressed that this approach should end the argument over whether the Administration was violating its pledge by doing more than just stopping the arms flow. The official also said that there was no thought of the Administration backing the insurgents in trying to overthrow the Sandinista Government.

The House earlier this year passed a bill cutting off all covert aid to the Nicaraguan insurgents for the 1983 fiscal year, but it stood little chance of passage by the Senate. In the absence of action by both houses to cut off the aid, it continued. Today's committee meeting seemed to clear the way for Senate approval for the 1984 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1. The House will have to decide whether it wants to vote again to cut off covert aid in the next fiscal year.

The Senate Intelligence Committee has generally been supportive of the

Administration's actions in Central America. The chief critic of the Administration on the committee is Senator Joseph R. Biden, Democrat of Delaware.

According to participants in the session, the Administration witnesses presented a formal finding by President Reagan that it would be in the national security interest to continue a paramilitary program directed against the Sandinistas.